DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 303 753 CG 021 453

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TITLE Single Parent Adoptions: An Issue of Difficulty and Import for Adoption Agencies.
INSTITUTION National Committee for Adoption, Inc., Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 8 Aug 87
NOTE 27p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the North American Council on Adoptable Children (Orlando, FL, August 8, 1987).
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adopted Children; *Adoption; Agencies; Child Welfare; Family (Sociological Unit); *Family Structure; *One Parent Family; *Placement; *Research Needs; Social Work

ABSTRACT

Little theoretical and empirical knowledge is available in the social work field to guide practitioners in the area of single parent adoption. In the context of demographics, the single parent family is now conventional. However there is not yet conclusive research on the success or failure of single parent households. Research has suggested that many special needs children are being placed with families that are or will be stressed by potentially destructive economic conditions. Arguments for single parenting include that single parenting may be the placement of choice for children due to past history; no research has shown that single parenting is in itself pathological; and an appropriate single parent is better than no home at all. Arguments against single parenting include the views that two parent families can provide role models for both sexes or that the two parent family is the "normal" family structure; and birth mothers prefer two parent families. Current research into the infant-father relationship could greatly enlighten the discussion of single parenting. While still inconclusive, the available research suggests that single persons are a resource for children but that sufficient questions still exist to prevent an unqualified endorsement of single parent adoption. The need for enlightenment is pressing, for children, would-be parents, and adoption professionals, who are not served when knowledge is replaced by myth and misconception. (ABL)

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SINGLE PARENT ADOPTIONS: AN ISSUE OF DIFFICULTY AND IMPORT FOR ADOPTION AGENCIES

BY JEFFREY ROSENBERG, MSW

PRESENTED AT THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE NORTH AMERICAN COUNCIL ON ADOPTABLE CHILDREN AUGUST 8, 1987 IN ORLANDO, FLORIDA

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Abstract of Seader paper

One of the most heated discussions among those who serve women with unplanned pregnancies, or who arrange adoptions, is the question of how much contact, and of what sort, ought to take place between those planning adoption for their child and those who will be adopting the child. This paper explores some of the issues involved in this debate as it pertains to pregnancy counseling and suggests that the terminology used has been less than helpful. The author suggests that rather than describing practices as "closed" or "open" one should consider the terms "traditional" and "experimental."

Abstract of Pierce paper

Teen women with unplanned pregnancies consititute one of America's greatest challenges in terms of providing good services and sound counseling about options. In this paper, delivered at the 1988 meeting of the Texas Association Concerned with School Age Parenthood, the author discusses some of the key issues in maternity services and adoption today, the trends that are being observed and the benefits to young women in particular which can be obtained by networking between adoption agencies and non-adoption providers of service, particularly schools, health clinics and family planning providers.

Abstract of Rosenberg paper

Single people are increasingly adopting children. Sometimes the reasons have to do with the fact that single persons wish to be parents but do not wish to marry. Sometimes the reasons have to do with the fact that no one else will give a child waiting in foster care a home except a single parent. In this paper, delivered at the 1987 conference of the North American Council on Adoptable Children, the author discusses this issue as it affects agency practice and reviews some of the literature on single parent adoption. The paper is footnoted and has a bibliography.

SINGLE PARENT ADOPTIONS: AN ISSUE OF DIFFICULTY AND IMPORT FOR ADOPTION AGENCIES

by Jeffrey Rosenberg, MSW

My name is Jeffrey Rosenberg and I am a social worker on the staff of the National Committee For Adoption. Before I delve into the subject of single parent adoption, let me first tell you just a little bit about the National Committee For Adoption because I think who we are can help you understand how we are examining this issue "in-house", so to speak. The National Committee For Adoption, or NCFA, is an association of private, non-profit adoption agencies. Currently we have approximately 135 agencies in membership, making NCFA the largest national, non-sectarian organization of voluntary adoption agencies. We very much see ourselves as a consumer organization -- in that we serve adoptive parents and would be adoptive parents through information and referral, newsletters, etc. -- but we are also very much the professional trade association of private, non-profit adoption agencies. Thus, in many ways we are examining the issue of single parent adoption through the eyes of service providers, the agencies.

That is, in a very encapsulated form, an overview of what the NCFA is. I've brought along some recent newsletters for you to take so that you can get a better sense of who we are and, of course, in case anyone would wish to become a member.

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Single parent adoption is one area in the field of adoption lacking both a theory and research. Little theoretical and empirical knowledge are available to the social work field to guide practice in this area. In their stead are individual experiences, myths, prejudices, rhetoric, and debate. Back in 1966 Elizabeth Glover wrote that

> Child Welfare has developed no new theories in relation to this new practice (i.e., single parent adoption). As of now, the practice is based on what amounts to a double standard. The field clings to its old psychological theories and, at the same time, says that for certain minority children the single parent family is preferable to the impermanence of long term foster care (1).

While this statement was written fully twenty years ago, both experience and a review of literature suggests that little has changed -- today, we do not have settled upon theories; we do, perhaps, have the development of theories.

This lack of mature theory on the issue of single parent adoption is in large part due to the relative lack of longitudinal research on the issue. Joan Shireman and Penny Johnson wrote in 1986 that

> There are only three published follow-up studies of single-parent adoptions: in two studies data were collected from a large sample through mailed questionnaires. The third study (that done by Shireman and Johnson themselves) has used a longitudinal research design and is based on interviews with a relatively small sample (2).

This brings us to the reason for this paper. The issue of single parent adoption is one that the member agencies of the National Committee For Adoption have been examining in some depth. This paper

represents NCFA's attempt to inform the discussion, to share with other service providers and with service consumers the thinking on the issue that has been devloping inside our national association. Nothing in this paper can or should be, however, taken as representing the positions of the National Committee For Adoption or of any member agency. Our thinking on this issue continues to develop and it would be inaccurate to say that our member agencies are all in agreement -- a situation that I expect to continue. We are though at the point in our discussions and examination that we felt it worthwhile to share some of this thinking.

The first task is to examine single parenthood -- not just single adoptive parenthood -- in the context of demographics. Many have said that, due to divorce and out-of-wedlock birth, the single parent family is no longer an aberration, that this type of family has become another norm of family structure. Noting that 60% of American children will at some point live with one parent, these people hold the belief that the single parent family has become so prevalent that this type of family structure is simply a close cousin to the two parent family structure, a close cousin that must now be seen as conventional.

I would put forth that the view that the single parent family is now conventional -- with emphasis on the word conventional -- is a disservice to these families. Such a view would have us ignore the true fact that these families are not viewed as conventional, that they are not seen by society as another norm for family structure. The fact is that, at any one time, 80 percent of American children live with two

parents. Further, 71 percent of the U.S. population, or 165 million people in 1985, live in homes headed by a married couple. Finally, today 95% of never married adults in this country expect to one day marry (3). Thus, only 2 out of 10 American children are in one-parent homes at any one time, only 3 out of 10 of all Americans do not live in a home headed by a married couple, and almost every American adult expects to marry at some time. Clearly, the norm of this society is still that families are headed by two-parents, that adults will marry, and that children will be raised by these married adults. If we ignore this we ignore the fact that single parent families face the unique stresses of living outside the norms of society. Any person or group who does not exhibit normative behavior will face pressures to return to that realm of behavior which is within the normative boundaries. These pressures need not be debilitating, and for most of those who are strong enough in the first place to choose a non-normative lifestyle they very well may not be debilitating. But to pretend that these pressures and stresses do not exist is foolish; this is what I believe we do to single parents when we tell them that their lifestyle is conventional.

Of course, there is a great deal of pressure to give the seal of approval to single parent families. With 50% of marriages ending in divorce, many of these involving children, it is quite comforting to us all to know that if our marriage fails we need not worry because those in the know tell us that single parenting works fine and is indeed "normal." It is a case of the "tail wagging the dog." The fact is that we do not yet have conclusive research on the success or failure

of single parent households. Until we do, we must recognize that these are families on the frontier, some in the situation against their wishes, others there by choice. If we don't recognize that they are on the frontier, we won't provide the supports and services that they will need, nor will we be understanding to the uniqueness of their situation.

There are many reasons for mourning the relative lack of research and theory on the subject of single adoptive parenting. While single adoptive parents may be relatively small in number, the issue of single adoptive parenting is clearly one that has implications beyond its small numbers. In a time that we as a society are intensely debating issues that are central to questions of the family unit -- teen pregnancy, the "crisis in the black family", homosexuality, AIDS, the so-called "birth dearth" (that is, the fact that the U.S. fertility rate is below replacement rates), the feminization of poverty -- the possibility of single persons actually becoming parents by choice raises more than just curiosity, it brings along with it intense private feelings, feelings that are all part of current public debates. One only has to look at the current welfare reform proposals in Washington today to understand how clearly the dominant views of family color our major debates. One of the major linchpins of these proposals would be a crusade to force negligient, non-custodial fathers to pay child support. Clearly, the conscious decision of policy makers to address child support in a big way -- perhaps the major way of providing support to women and children -- grows out of societal understanding of what is family.

I would provide only a few examples to show how strong the reactions to single parenting are and how these reactions are part of our public discourse. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, now Senator from New York, wrote in 1965:

> From the wild Irish slums of the nineteenth century eastern seaboard, to the riot-torn suburbs of Los Angeles, there is one unmistakable lesson in American history: a community that allows a large number of young men to grow up in broken families, dominated by women, never acquiring any stable relationship to male authority, never acquring any set of rational expectations about the future -- that community asks for and gets chaos...And it is richly deserved (4).

In 1985, Senator Moynihan, reflecting on his words of 20 years ago, wrote that "[c]learly, single parent households can be a better, more healthful, more stable environment than the...alternative...And yet as an ecological proposition the passage [above] is defensible."

From the other end of the political spectrum, columnist Suzanne Fields wrote last year that "[t]here's renewed recognition for the ways Father can be Father and act as the masculine authority in his family. But sad to say, a rising number of children are raised in fatherless homes with grave consequences..." (5).

And finally comes the current hot debate from Boston regarding a black television news anchorwoman, single, who is now pregnant and has publicly stated her plan to raise the child as a single parent. The discussion regarding whether this woman is in the right has gone beyond Boston and into the national press. Writes Carl Rowan, noted black

columnist, "[t]his black TV celebrity obviously counts herself among [those]...who have thumbed their noses at the old social and moral conventions without fear of losing their jobs or their stardom. What we have is a national social tragedy, and I cannot see how a black TV anchorwoman in Boston or anyplace else would feel comfortable adding to it" (6).

Certainly, these reactions and their roles in public discourse will affect any discussion of and have some effect upon any action or policy regarding single adoptive parenting. Any agency or any social worker considering implementing -- or not implementing -- programs targeted toward single adoptive parents and applicants will naturally be strongly effected by these public debates.

So how do we get beyond the general discussion of single parenting to a more specific discussion of single adoptive parenting? Isn't it unfair to lump single adoptive parents into the same cauldron of disparagement that includes the "wild Irish slums of the nineteenth century" and the "riot-torn suburbs of Los Angeles", in the words of Senator Moynihan? The answer is: "probably." Single persons who adopt are different people than many of the single parents who are decimated by poverty, most specifically by the feminization of poverty. According to a survey conducted by the Committee for Single Adoptive Parents, which may or may not be representative of the single adoption picture nationally, the majority of single adoptive parents are middle class or above. Of 101 respondents to the Committee's survey, 84% were college graduates and 69% had completed some post-graduate work. A large

proportion, 47%, are in "helping professions" -- teachers, nurses, college professors, social workers, etc. Thirty-six percent worked in business, either as business owners, attorneys, top or middle-level management, accountants, engineers, or computer programmers. The majority of the respondents to the Committee's survey were in their thirties, with most of these being between the ages of 35 and 40 (7). Sharon Dougherty, in her 1978 study published in the journal Social Work, reported that single adoptors in her sample, all women, exceeded the national average for women for income, employment and education (8).

On the other hand, a recent federal funded study of the special needs adoption field might give us pause. This study shows that a sizable proportion, quite possibly as many as half, of special needs children are being placed with families that are older, many older than 60, and/or with families that are of marginal income, many literally below the poverty level, and/or with single parents. The data provided by this study would suggest that many special needs children are being placed with families, some headed by single parents, that are or will be stressed by potentially destructive economic conditions.

Other data suggest that single adoptors are more willing to adopt children with special needs than are married couples. William Feigelman and Arnold Silverman surveyed 737 adoptive families in 1975, 58 of whom were single adoptive parents. They report in Chosen Children, published in 1983, that 79% of singles reported a willingness to adopt an older child, compared to 60% of adoptive couples (9).

Eighty-two percent were willing to adopt a black child (the sample being primarily white) while 56% of couples were so willing. And 51% of singles were willing to adopt a child with slight mental retardation, compared to 32% of adoptive couples. Whether these differences reported by Feigelman represent a difference in personalities and/or desires between singles and couples seeking to adopt, or whether the data more accurately represents the single adoptor's understanding that many agencies will only place a special needs child with them, is unclear.

Thus, with available data we are able to draw a fairly good picture of who most adoptive parents are, even though at times it may be a contradictory picture. Understanding who these people are helps frame the discussion. But it does not help us fully engage in a constructive debate. This is a good time to very briefly outline the arguments, both pro and con, concerning the question of whether single persons should be considered a regular resource for adoptable children, and if so, whether they should be able to adopt as readily as couples? From discussions with adoption agency personnel, child welfare advocates, and single adoptive parents, and from an examination of the literature, I have put together the following list of pro and con arguments.

On the pro side are:

1) Single parents face the same difficulties that two parent families face. The only difference is, to quote one single adoptive parent, that there are "two of them and one of us -- we just have to work

harder, but the issues are no different."

2) Single parenting can be the placement of choice for many children. Some children, due to past history or lagging development, may not be able to navigate the varying relational systems that are part of a two parent family and therefore will develop better in the one-on-one situation of a one-parent family. Other children, due to past history, may not be able to form a relationship with an adult of one gender -- the example of a child sexually abused by a former male caretaker who needs to be raised by a single woman is often put forth.

3) Older children with a history of manipulating adult caretakers may find the tool of manipulation to be much less effective where there is only one adult caretaker.

4) There is no research to show that single parenting is in itself pathological. In fact, experience would suggest the opposite. Therefore, single persons should be treated the same as couples when it comes to adoption, that is, whoever finds themself at the top of the agency waiting list is the next to adopt, regardless of marital status.

5) Such discrimination is illegal

6) An appropriate single parent is better than no home for a waiting child.

Those arguments generally put forth against treating single adoptive

applicants the same as two parent adoptive couples are:

1) Single adoptive parents will be stressed to a greater extent by such concerns as child care and finances. Single parents generally have less financial resources than two parent families, especially when the single parent is a woman.

2) Two parent families provide the child with role models and identification with parents of both sexes. While this may not be absolutely necessary for successful development of the child, it is beneficial to the child and allows the child to experiment, through identification, with a variety of roles. Two parents of differing genders allow for optimal psychosexual development.

3) Single adoptive parents do not have anyone to share the load with. These families could too quickly become overloaded in times of stress.

4) The two parent family is the "normal" family structure. Barring any special needs of the child, it is better to place a child in this "normal" structure.

5) If a single person marries subsequent to the adoption, the child may be in danger of abuse -- or rejection. Research has begun to suggest a greater likelihood of abuse in stepparent families.

6) Birth parent preference -- Women voluntarily relinquishing a child say they would raise the child themselves if they thought that single

parenting was appropriate.

Much of the basis of this paper was to allow an examination of how current research is, or should be, informing this debate. For several of the points outlined above adequate research is not yet available. Thus I will not delve deeply into some of these aspects of the debate. I will examine other areas in depth: first, I will present a summary of the available research on single adoptive parents, a body of research that is not yet conclusive but that clearly suggests that single persons can be more than adequate adoptive parents; secondly, I will summarize a large study that would lead us to have some trepidations about single parenthood; and finally I will present a summary of some beginning research into the role of the father in child development in order to inform the question of male role models and single adoptive parenting.

Feigelman and Silverman compared single adoptive parents with two parent adoptive families in three areas: physical heatlh, emotional adjustment, and growth or development problems. "The responses given by the single parents paralleled those given by adopting couples," they write. "No statistically significant differences were noted..." Single parents did report significantly more emotional problems experienced by their children than did adoptive couples. However, when the age of the child was controlled, the emotional adjustment of the children of single parents was found to be as good as that of the children of couples. This was not true for children over six years of age, though. These older children in single parent households still

exhibited more difficulties. The authors hypothesize, however, that the most troubled older children are placed with singles because of agencies' reluctance to approve adoptions by singles, thus accounting for the poorer adjustment of older children in single parent homes as compared to children of similar age placed in two parent homes.

Feigelman and Silverman revisited the children and families in their sample six years later. Again they found no significant differences between children adopted by singles and children adopted by couples. They reported that "there were some slight and consistent differences showing children raised by single parents to be experiencing more problems, in no case were these differences statistically significant." Single adoptive parents reported overall adjustment problems sometimes or often in 23% of the cases, compared with 16% of the two parent families. Single adoptive parents reported in 43% of the cases that their children sometimes experienced emotional problems, compared with 38% of the adoptive couples. And 11% of the single adoptive parents reported growth problems sometimes or often for their children; 12% of the adoptive parents reported growth problems for their children. These researchers concluded by stating that "[b]efore being entirely confident that single parents offer benefits to waiting children that are similar to those found in two-parent homes, additional studies will be necessary...If future studies confirm the present results, then there would be a need for reconceptualization of a great many theories of child development. Many of these theories maintain that two-parent families are indispensable to successfully resolve Oedipus and Electra complexes, to offer role modeling opportunities,..." (10).

Shireman and Johnson are in the midst of following a sample of adopted children; they have interviewed these children at age 4 and most recently at age 8. Their sample is made up of black children adopted into two parent, same race homes; black children adopted transracially; and black children adopted by single parents. While their most recent article, published in 1986, examines a variety of interesting issues, I will only present the findings most relevant to the issue of single adoptive parents. Children in all three groups were found to be making an equal adjustment; 45 percent of all the children, regardless of the type of family that had adopted them, were considered to be "making an excellent adjustment." Shireman and Johnson looked at the provision of male role models for the children of single adoptive mothers. They write that

> The [social] workers hoped that the male role model (in homes with a female parent) and the female role model (in homes with a male parent) could be provided by close friends and extended family, and early adoptive studies for single parents stressed the importance of these relationships. However, although many of the single parents live in extended families, it does not seem that the children have generally had an opportunity to interact over a period of time with an important person of the opposite sex from their parent. Male friends have not been stable figures...Almost all the single women stated that their closest social relationships are with other women. Yet, at the age of 8, the children of single parents are, like other children in the sample at this age, showing no overt problems with sexual identification (11).

Further, these authors write that:

> When the children were at age 4, there was concern about the real isolation of some of these families; with

school activities, this concern seems to have lessened somewhat (12).

While Shireman and Johnson express some reservations as their sample moves into adolescence, the findings thus far support the positive conclusions of Feigelman and Silverman. Taken together, these two studies would lead us to tentatively conclude that single adoptive parenting can indeed be a positive resource for children. And given the difficulties and obstacles in trying to adopt that some would be single adoptors report, a process of what one single adoptor calls "natural selection," it is not surprising to learn of the level of commitment that these people have to their children. Thus, I believe that it is safe to conclude that single adoptive applicants should regularly be considered as resources for adoptable children. The question still remains though, as to whether agencies should consider them to be on equal footing with two parent applicants.

I will briefly summarize a study that would suggest that the answer to this second question may be no. Then, I will spend a bit more time summarizing some new research that critically examines the major issue: are two parents necessary for the development of the child?

Daniel Mueller and Phillip Cooper, in a paper presented at the 1984 meetings of the American Sociological Association, reported on their survey of 1,400 young adults, approximately 10% of whom were raised in single parents. After controlling for socio-economic status of family of origin, these researchers found that those young adults who grew up in single parent homes were more likely to have experienced divorce,

were more likely to have a child out-of-wedlock, and suffered from poorer economic circumstances (13). What was not possible to determine from Mueller and Cooper's paper was what proportion of these negative outcomes were attributable to the divorce, separation, or death of the young adults' parents that led to being raised in a single parent home in the first place, and what proportion was attributable solely to the condition of single parenthood. Thus, this research, while daunting, may be of only limited relevance to the experience of many single adoptive parents who become single by choice, sparing their children the trauma of divorce or separation.

There is now developing a new line of research that could greatly enlighten the discussion of single parenting in general and single adoptive parenting in particular. This is the research into the infant-father relationship. A very few researchers have begun to examine the development and implications of this relationship. One of these is Michael Yogman of Harvard Medical School. Dr. Yogman has written of the unique role of the father in the early development of the child. Until recently, child development theory had not acknowledged a meaningful and direct role for the father in the child's development until the preschool years when role identification begins to take place. However, researchers such as Dr. Yogman are beginning to show that the father has a meaningful and unique role in the child's development from birth. "In many ways," writes Dr. Yogman, "the development of the father-infant relationship is similar to the mother-infant relationship in that infants can elicit competent loving caregiving from both male and female adults....In other ways, however,

it seems that the father-infant relationship is unique and complementary to the mother-infant relationship" (14).

Yogman reports that fathers provide more physical and tactile play with infants than do mothers. Fathers are much more likely to play games with their infants than are mothers, and the games played by father and infant tend to be more physical and auditory, such as limb-movement games, and more physically stimulating and exciting than the games played by mothers with infants six months or younger. In contrast, mothers tend to partake in verbal stimulation of their infants. By age two-and-a-half, Yogman writes that fathers are better able to engage their children in play than are mothers and that studies show that children of this age preferred to play with fathers and were judged to be more involved and excited with fathers. Mothers have been observed to be more involved with caretaking activities.

Major development tasks of a child during the first two years involves the separation from mother and the development of autonomy. Yogman posits a direct role of the father in the developing autonomy of young children. The stimulating play provided by fathers, resulting in heightened excitement on the part of the child, provides the very young child with an emotional state different than that experienced with mother and provides the child with the opportunity to test new experiences outside the world of mother-child. The findings of Yogman's study exhibiting preference for father for play activities would support this theory.

Yogman further writes that sex role identification begins to develop much earlier than previously thought, at least for males. Studies show that one-year-old male infants look more at fathers than at mothers during free play and remain closer and vocalize more to fathers during stress. By the age of 20 months male children show a specific play preference for fathers.

Yogman acknowledges that the implications of early father-infant relationships for later child development have not been adequately studied. He does write, however, based on available research, that children with fathers available to them from birth will develop normal autonomy and, especially for males, adequate sex role identification in a more timely and/or easier fashion than those children who do not have fathers available. He goes on to write though, that "[t]he fact that single parents, and in particular, single women, also raise autonomous children means that parents can and do play dual roles with their children, but in no way does it imply that playing dual roles is an easy task" (15). While this summary of Dr. Yogman's writing is briefer than his work deserves; it does provide us with an understanding of the important role of the father in early childhood development.

Thus, we are presented with limited research with which to answer our second question: should singles be treated the same as couples for purposes of adoption? It is limited research that deserves even more discussion than time allows me here. But I would nonetheless posit that the answer to this question is no. Single parents should be resources for adoptable children; however, the research of Mueller and

Cooper and of Yogman suggests that enough questions still exist about single parenting that the two parent family should be considered as the preferable resource for most children, especially for infants.

Such a conclusion leads to some clear policy decisions. And it is a conclusion that I am arriving at without discussing a variety of issues that time would not allow -- such issues as myths about single adoptive parenting; the paradox of a policy of placing special needs children, the most challenging children, with single adoptive parents; barriers that are unique to single persons wishing to adopt, such as the evolution of adoptive practice that encourages birthmothers to choose the type of home they desire for their child; the issue of homosexuals adopting; theological reasons why some sectarians agencies will not place children with single persons; issues that social workers and would be single adoptive parents should examine when planning for a single adoptive placement.

It is noteworthy that, to the best of my knowledge, there has never been an agressive recruitment campaign to find homes for waiting children targeted directly at single persons. The need for homes and the current state of research suggests that single persons are an untapped resource for these children. Some recruitment campaigns pay only lip service to single persons. One agency used to state on their recruitment materials that "We want to hear from all who feel they have love and understanding to share. Single women or men can adopt" (16). However, one single adoptor, who eventually adopted from South America, tells of calling every agency in her city, including the agency quoted

above, and being told that she need not apply because she was single. When she asked another agency about the possibility of adopting a waiting child she was told that a single person could not provide adequate care. When she protested, the worker asked her if she could physically lift a 16 year old paraplegic in a wheelchair, and stated that if she could not then she is not a suitable candidate. Certainly, such hostility towards single parents is not universal -- the federal study of special needs adoption cited earlier showed that approximately 20% of placements are to single persons, equal to the proportion of all families that are headed by single parents in the United States. But that such prejudices exist and that some social workers are unwilling to look beyond the myths is unacceptable, given the need for suitable homes.

This leads to the second policy implication. Information regarding single parent adoption must be made readily available both to would be adoptors and professionals. Such information is not readily available; this is a complaint heard from both professionals and single adoptive parents that I have spoken to. The federal government will soon be starting a National Adoption Clearinghouse; this is the result of legislation that we pushed through Congress and which clearly is mandated by law to include information about all types of adoption, including single parent. There must be further research and analysis in the area of single adoptive parenting -- a role we hope to have a part in. Too much of our discussion and decision making in this area is based on misconceptions or on research of single families created by divorce or abandonment; such research can only present us with a

limited and clouded view of single adoptive parenting.

To conclude, the issues of single parent adoption are inadequately researched and lack a theoretical basis upon which practice decisions can be based. The available research, while still inconclusive, suggests that single persons are a resource for children but that sufficient questions still exist to prevent an unqualified endorsement of single parent adoption. It has been at least 20 years since the first systematic use of single persons as adoptive resources; that we still do not have a complete body of knowledge on this phenomenom is unfortunate. Clearly the need for enlightenment is pressing, for children, would be parents, and adoption professionals are not served when knowledge is replaced by myth and misconception.

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